



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Religious diversity and tolerance in Ottoman guilds

Citation for published version:

Asceric-Todd, I 2018, Religious diversity and tolerance in Ottoman guilds. in D Thomas & J Chesworth (eds), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History Volume 12. Asia, Africa and the Americas (1700-1800)*. vol. 12, History of Christian-Muslim Relations, vol. 36, Brill, Leiden, pp. 29-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004384163>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1163/9789004384163](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004384163)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Early version, also known as pre-print

Published In:

Christian-Muslim Relations

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Religious Diversity and Tolerance in Ottoman Guilds

Ines Aščerić-Todd

By definition, guilds are organisations intended to provide a support network and protect the common interests of their members, craftsmen, traders, or members of a certain profession generally. Ottoman guilds were no exception.

Although, in the past, there have been attempts to characterise the Ottoman craftsmen's organisation as 'non-guild-like' in comparison with their Western European counterparts,¹ such views have since been found unjustified, and it is now generally accepted that Ottoman guilds functioned as professional guild associations, and fitted this definition by fulfilling two main criteria: firstly, they had elected guild officials, who represented guild members and were in charge of guild administration, and, secondly, even in the early periods of craft organisation in the Ottoman Empire – namely, the late 15th and early 16th century – before formal guild officials and administration are much more in evidence, craftsmen's

¹ The most prominent representative of this trend was the Israeli historian Gabriel Baer who, in a number of works in the 1960s and 1970s, argued that Ottoman guilds did not exist to defend the interests of their members but were simply a governmental tool for controlling the craftsmen. Examples of his works promoting this view include: Gabriel Baer, 'The Administrative, Economic and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.1/1970, pp. 28-50; and 'Monopolies and Restrictive Practices of Turkish Guilds', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 13/2 (April 1970), pp. 145-165. Baer himself, however, significantly modified his views towards the end of his life, acknowledging this change of mind in an article published just before his death: 'Ottoman Guilds: a Reassessment', in Halil İnalcık and Osman Okyar, eds., *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920) (Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920))*, (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980), pp. 95-102; cited in Suraiya Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople under the Ottomans* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pp 7-8, 10. All of these studies, and some others, were conveniently republished in one collection entitled *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History* (London: Frank Cass, 1982).

representatives petitioned the government, through the *kadi* courts, on behalf of the practitioners of their craft in order to represent, protect or extend the latter's interests.²

Evidence to this effect has been found by all significant studies of guilds in Ottoman cities across the empire, ranging from Istanbul and Bursa, representing the Ottoman capital and its heartland of Anatolia, Aleppo and Jerusalem, among others, from the Arab provinces, to the province of Bosnia, with its capital Saray-Bosna, today's Sarajevo, representing Rumeli, or Ottoman Europe.³

As transpires from this evidence, the primary concerns of the guilds representing the craftsmen of these cities were negotiating and setting prices of both raw material and finished products, or services, quality control and control of production processes – in other words, making sure products were made according to traditional procedures and to set standards –, fair and equitable treatment of both customers and fellow craftsmen, as well as applying penalties for any misconduct or breach of regulations committed by the latter. Such regulations were varied and ranged from simple to very elaborate and sophisticated, depending on the nature of the craft and the product in question. Examples of the former include how long a pair of shoes should last before they needed repairs, as recorded in a 16th-century Istanbul market inspector's edict,⁴ or how much a lady's cloak (*ferace*) should cost, as evidenced by a record in 18th-century Sarajevo, of a tailor who was reported to have

² Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire*, pp. 31-34. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 135. For more on this issue see Ines Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia: Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), Ch. 8, pp. 136-142.

³ Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire*, pp. 31-34. See also: Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Crisis and Change, 1590-1699', in Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 411-636; Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Haim Gerber, *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1988); Charles Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo 1640-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Amnon Cohen, *The Guilds of Ottoman Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia*; Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Esnaft i Obrti u Bosni i Hercegovini (1463-1878)*, (*Guilds and Crafts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1463-1878)*), Izabrana Djela II (Selected works II), (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1991).

⁴ Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire*, p. 38.

overcharged a customer, as a result of which the penalty of a temporary closure of his shop was applied by the administration of his guild.⁵ A good example of the latter is a 17th-century regulation of the textile workers' guild in Aleppo concerning the quality of blue bath wraps (*fūṭa*) they were producing: according to the regulation, recorded in the Aleppo court registers, the wraps were to measure exactly 'three *dhirā*'s less one quarter in length, and two *dhirā*'s less one quarter in width', and the measurements had to be taken after the cloth had been soaked in water and then dried. Whoever did not respect those exact regulations was punished, with a fine or a more severe penalty, by the *kadi* at the request of the head of the guild and other members.⁶

Thus, while there to protect the interests of their members, the guilds did discipline those among them they found guilty of breach of conduct, and even, if necessary, denounced them to the government, as transgression on the part of an individual member was seen as damaging to the common interests and reputation of the craft and guild in question.

However, while displaying parallels with their Western European counterparts, in terms of the nature and the purpose of their organisation, Ottoman guilds did differ from the former in one crucial aspect, their religious diversity: while European guilds regularly banned from their membership Jews, and even Christians of other denominations whom they considered heretical, Ottoman guilds (and, for that matter, Islamic guilds generally) were open to all non-Muslims.

The inter-confessionalism of Ottoman guilds is still a largely unexplored subject, due in part to the restricted nature of the evidence available to us on this aspect of the guilds. This evidence comes from a limited number of eye-witness observations, such as, most notably,

⁵ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, p. 116.

⁶ Abdul-Karim Rafeq, 'Craft Organization, Work Ethics, and the Strains of Change in Ottoman Syria', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 111/3 (July-Sep 1991), p. 506.

those of the 17th-century traveller and most famous observer of the Ottoman Empire, Evliya Çelebi (1611– c.1682),⁷ occasional individual guild registers, very few of which have thus far been examined or even located, and mostly from court records of complaints or disputes which happened to involve non-Muslim craftsmen in some capacity. In most cases, the disputes were not specifically concerned with the fact that the craftsmen in question were not Muslim, but rather with some anomaly to an established practice, or a breach of rules of conduct or guild regulations in some way. This proves that the guilds themselves did not consider their mixed religious membership an issue; indeed, there were no rules designed or written specifically for non-Muslims, and all guild regulations were applicable to all its members regardless of their confessional affiliation.

Anecdotal though it may be in its nature – inasmuch as our knowledge about non-Muslim craftsmen is usually limited to their involvement in a dispute, or, occasionally, some other formal guild business ratified in the court registers – this evidence nevertheless paints a picture of Ottoman guilds as an economic and social structure conducive to religious integration, cooperation and tolerance, thus making them one of the best examples of effective practical application of the Ottoman *millet* system.

For most Ottoman cities, evidence shows existence of both mixed and religiously homogenous guilds, be they Muslim, Christian or Jewish. What this depended upon was of course the religious make-up of the society in question, as well as what crafts and trades were associated with particular religious groups or communities in those areas.

⁷ Evliya's celebrated travelogue, *Seyahatname*, has been most recently edited and published in transcription as: Evliyâ bin Dervîş Mehmed Zillî Çelebi / ed. O.Ş. Gökyay et al., *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 304 Numaralı Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu — Dizini* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996–).

Thus, by the 18th century, Istanbul guilds of greengrocers, butchers, silk-carders, tassel-dealers, saddlers, boatmen, water-carriers, and porters, among others, all had mixed non-Muslim and Muslim membership, in various combinations, either Muslim and Christian (Greek or Armenian), like the butchers, porters, or water-carriers, Jewish and Christian, like the fez tassel-dealers, or, in some cases, all three confessions together, as in the case of the boatmen guild.⁸ In Damascus, mixed guilds included those of coppersmiths, carpenters, jewellers, scribes, calligraphers, and entertainers,⁹ while in Bursa, for instance, almost all guilds were mixed, including, rather surprisingly, given its religious dimensions, the guild of the coffin makers.¹⁰ In Sarajevo, the membership of the guilds fully reflected its multi-confessional society: the goldsmiths' guild, for instance, consisted of members of all four main confessions, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians, blacksmiths were Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox, and silk-carders were Muslim, Orthodox and Jewish.¹¹

At the same time, however, some crafts and therefore their guilds were the preserve of a particular religious or even ethnic community: in Istanbul, for example, fish cooking was exclusively in the hands of the Greek Orthodox,¹² while tin-smelters, pearl merchants and parchment makers were all Jewish.¹³ Likewise, the guild of gold and silver smelters in Aleppo was exclusively Jewish,¹⁴ while masons and sculptors' guild of Damascus was

⁸ Baer, *Monopolies and Restrictive Practices*, p. 159.

⁹ Hamilton Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (London: OUP, 1950), p. 294, n. 2. The 'entertainers' guild is just one of a number of non-mainstream guilds illustrating the tolerance typical of a medieval and early-modern Muslim urban society. Others included beggars', pickpockets/thieves', and even prostitutes' guilds, as recorded in Evliya Çelebi's description of Cairo, cited in Timur Kuran, 'Islamic Influences on the Ottoman Guilds', in Kemal Çiçek, ed., *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation, vol. 2: Economy and Society* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2000), p. 44. See also Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 508. Indeed, prostitution was a very popular profession in some other cities too, such as Aleppo, for instance, in which a study of 300 years' worth of court records showed that 42 per cent of all cases of alleged fornication (*zina*), involved family businesses (Heather J. Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), p. 93).

¹⁰ Kuran, *Islamic Influences*, p. 45. Gerber, *Economy and Society*, p. 58.

¹¹ Kreševljaković, *Esnaft i Obrti*, p. 45.

¹² *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 1, p. 255, cited in Kuran, *Islamic Influences*, p. 45.

¹³ Baer, *Monopolies and Restrictive Practices*, p. 157.

¹⁴ Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 508.

Christian.¹⁵ Druggists and butchers, on the other hand, seem to have regularly formed one large guild, with Muslim and Jewish subdivisions – this was the case in Istanbul, Aleppo and Cairo, at any rate.¹⁶

In the Greek city of Thessaloniki, which had always had a sizeable Jewish population, and which, thanks to the large waves of new Jewish immigrants from Spain and elsewhere in Europe in the 16th century, quickly became a majority Jewish city, thus acquiring the epithet ‘the Jerusalem of the Balkans’, the entire production of woollen textiles was in the hands of the Jewish population, whose monopoly on this craft was protected by the state: the Jewish producers had the priority purchasing rights of the raw material, and others were allowed to buy wool only after the needs of the Jewish craftsmen were met; in exchange for this concession, all finished products of woollen cloth producers of Thessaloniki were reserved for sale in Istanbul.¹⁷

The ethnic and religious make-up of the guilds was not fixed; rather it was fluid and changed with time and circumstances. While some guilds started off as mixed, with time they became homogenised, as in the case of the furriers in Sarajevo, for instance: in the 16th century there were both Muslims and Christians who engaged in this craft, while by the 18th century the Muslims had stopped practising it and the guild became exclusively Christian, mostly Orthodox.¹⁸ Also in the 18th century, the Christian members of the velvet and brocade dealers’ guild in Istanbul applied for the creation of a separate guild for themselves.¹⁹ The reverse was also true: the leather and oil merchants in Istanbul were initially all Muslims, but,

¹⁵ Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, p. 294, n. 2.

¹⁶ Kuran, *Islamic Influences*, p. 45; Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 501.

¹⁷ Nikolai Todorov, *The Balkan City, 1400-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), p. 192.

¹⁸ Kreševljaković, *Esnafi i Obrti*, p. 45.

¹⁹ Baer, *Monopolies and Restrictive Practices*, p. 156.

with time, non-Muslims started engaging in these trades, and, by the 18th century, these two guilds became mixed.²⁰

The guilds' internal structures allowed for and supported their mixed membership. While, as is to be expected, heads of guilds generally tended to be elected from among Muslims – even in non-Muslim majority guilds²¹ – there are plenty of examples which show that the right of the majority membership of the guild was recognised and their representation in the guild administration was deemed appropriate and probably useful: in large guilds which were split into confessional sub-divisions, the latter were able to have their own deputy heads, as in the case of the druggists' guild in Aleppo, where the Jewish subdivision had its own Jewish deputy (*yığıt-başı*).²² Likewise, the exclusively Jewish gold and silver smelters' guild had a Jewish head of guild (*shaykh*).²³ In Sofia, Christian horsehair weavers' guild elected their own non-Muslim head of the guild (*kethüda*), and so did fur-cap makers of Ruse, another Bulgarian city.²⁴ When a democratic process of a majority vote was applied in practice, it allowed for situations in which a non-Muslim could be elected as the head of a mixed membership guild, as in the example of the skullcap traders' guild in Istanbul, which, up until 1657, had non-Muslim administration, and whose members were now asking for a re-election

²⁰ Baer, *Monopolies and Restrictive Practices*, p. 156. While this paper by Baer is very useful as it extracts from three different sources some pertinent information on the ethnic and religious make-up of Istanbul guilds for the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, it should be observed that, much as he has done elsewhere with the view proposing a complete lack of autonomy on the part of Ottoman guilds (see note 1 above), Baer here sets out to prove and passionately argues that the majority of Ottoman guilds were confined to one religious community; in other words, that segregated guilds were the norm, while mixed ones were the exception. However, he does not make a very convincing argument, and, as can be seen even here, the evidence he cites himself does not support his view at all.

²¹ Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: the Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 33.

²² Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 501.

²³ Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 508.

²⁴ Todorov, *The Balkan City*, p. 121.

and appointment of Muslim members to these posts, since the guild membership had now turned majority Muslim.²⁵

As already mentioned, one of the guilds' primary concerns was to protect the interests of the individual craftsmen and those of the guild as an economic and social unit. Guild regulations and established practice came first and foremost in the order of priority, regardless of one's religious affiliation. However, one could perhaps argue that it is the craftsmen of the religious minorities that may have been in greater need of protection precisely because of their minority status, as a court case against a group of Jewish physicians in Cairo illustrates: after being accused by an unnamed group of Muslims of being incompetent, the physicians' guild stepped up and protected their members; the head of the guild, who was Muslim, and another Muslim member were brought to court as witnesses and vouched for the Jewish physicians' competence and skill as healers, procuring, as a result, a *fatwa* protecting the latter's rights to practice.²⁶ The protection of the rights of religious minorities within the guilds took a variety of forms: the Jewish sub-division of the butchers' guild in Aleppo, for instance, was given a special dispensation by the *shaykh* of the guild to sell their meat at prices higher than those allowed to Muslim butchers in order to support the poor within the Jewish community there;²⁷ also in Aleppo, in order to protect the rights of its Christian members, the Muslim/Christian mixed guild of cloth-bleachers made sure they recorded in the *kadi* register the regulation which stipulates equal division of raw materials between their members regardless of which religious community they belonged.²⁸ Finally, two 'smallware-dealers' guilds in Istanbul, one exclusively Muslim and the other Jewish, provide an example of intra-

²⁵ Ömer Düzbakar, 'Work and Organization in the Ottoman Empire: Notes on the Trade-Guilds of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Bursa', *Turkish Studies: International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, vol. 3/4 (Summer 2008), p. 439.

²⁶ Sherry Sayed Gadelrab, 'Medical Healers in Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1805', *Medical History* 54/2010, pp. 377-378.

²⁷ Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 500.

²⁸ Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 508.

guild cooperation and support: the Muslim guild advocated in court for the Jewish guild's rights – which had presumably somehow been put into question – to sell European-made glass products.²⁹

Just like making sure that religious minorities were properly represented in the guild administration and their views were taken into account would have been useful for the smooth functioning of the guild system, so was the protection of the rights of non-Muslim members extended not always purely for the sake of the craftsmen themselves; rather, in some such cases, it is obvious that the interests of the guild and the protection of the craft were probably the priority: when some Jewish silk traders of Bursa complained to the *kadi* against one of their own member, also Jewish, who had apparently breached the rules of trade and had been selling unprocessed silk in secret, they asked for an appointment of a Jewish market supervisor, whom they obviously thought capable of dealing with this problem; their request was granted and a Jewish supervisor was appointed, clearly because the *kadi* thought this to be in the interest of efficient running of this trade and possibly the market itself.³⁰

The religious character of Ottoman guilds has been a matter of debate for a long time. Even though the guilds' relationship with and their evolution from the 14th-century religious fraternities of Akhis, from Anatolia, has been acknowledged from the very beginning of academic engagement with the subject,³¹ many scholars have nevertheless maintained that Ottoman guilds very quickly lost the religious attributes they had inherited from the Akhis, and became purely secular, socio-economic organisations. However, this view, which was at

²⁹ Sharkey, *History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews*, p. 93.

³⁰ Düzbakar, *Work and Organization*, p. 434.

³¹ One early work dealing with the topic is Bernard Lewis' article 'The Islamic Guilds', in *The Economic History Review*, vol. 8/1 (Nov 1937), pp. 20-37, which he concludes by saying: "Unlike the European, the Islamic guild was never a purely professional organisation. ... [The guilds] have always had a deep-rooted ideology, a moral and ethical code, which was taught to all novices at the same time as the craft itself" (p. 37). See also Franz Taeschner's articles 'Akhi', 'Akhi Baba' and 'Akhi Ewran' in *EI2* (1960–2002), I, pp. 321-325.

its most popular around the 1970s,³² has since undergone considerable criticism, and has been shown unjustified. For while it is true that the guilds did not impose Islam as a condition of their membership or for engaging in a particular craft, and their established practices and regulations emphasised morality, noble conduct and mutual respect and cooperation – all of which could be considered as generally desirable traits found in any culture or religious tradition – it has also been shown that *futuwwa* – the Islamic code of noble conduct and chivalry associated with Sufism and with the Ottoman guilds' predecessors, the Akhis, – survived in the later periods of the guilds' existence in the form of *futuwwa* guild statutes, which outlined guild regulations and informed guild ceremonies and rituals, the most important of which were that of a novice's initiation into a craft, and the graduation of a novice or a journeyman at the end of their training.³³ Both of these ceremonies included the *futuwwa* ritual of 'the girding of the belt' – which symbolised the spiritual bond between the craftsman and his craft master, as well as the craft's patron saint and protector – and some guild procedures also mirrored practices of Sufi orders – which, as part of their Akhi heritage, many guilds were associated with – such as, for instance, the practice of a trial/initiation period for a novice,³⁴ or that of cutting the latter's hair at the start of their apprenticeship.³⁵ With very minor variations, these rituals were performed by the guilds throughout the Ottoman Empire, be it in Istanbul, Bursa, the Arab provinces, or the Balkans.³⁶

³² An early and particularly fervent champion of this view was, once again, Gabriel Baer; see, for instance, Baer, *Administrative, Economic and Social Functions*. For a much more recent expression of support for this stance see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, 'Ahi', in *Eİİ* (2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23942> [accessed 16 May 2018]. For more details on the nature of the debate see Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, Ch. 4, pp. 83-92.

³³ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, Chs. 5 and 6, pp. 93-125. See also Faroqhi, *Artisans of Empire*, pp. 27-30.

³⁴ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, pp. 97-98.

³⁵ Düzbakar, *Work and Organization*, p. 442.

³⁶ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, pp. 117-125. See also Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, pp. 293-294; Düzbakar, *Work and Organization*, pp. 440-443; and Ines Aščerić-Todd, 'The Noble Traders: the Islamic Tradition of "Spiritual Chivalry" (*futuwwa*) in Bosnian Trade-Guilds (16th-19th century)', *The Muslim World*, 97/2 (2007), 159-73.

This being the case, one question that inevitably presents itself is how did the guilds reconcile their nourishing of this Islamic tradition and associated rituals with their multi-confessional membership? According to some, this was possible because the guild ceremonies had evolved from their earlier Akhi versions into purely symbolic ones, and had no overtly religious contents.³⁷ This would indeed constitute a plausible explanation – and may well have been the case in some places, like Bulgaria, to which this suggestion relates, and which had a large proportion of non-Muslim craftsmen and guild members – if there were not, at the same time, numerous examples of guild ceremonies which, apart from the girding ritual, advice on honourable business and personal conduct, and different pledges to the masters of the guild, also included prayers and religious invocations.³⁸ Moreover, although the initiation and graduation ceremonies were most commonly held at guild outings in some prominent picnic spot in, or on the outskirts of the city, these locations were often linked to Sufi lodges, such that the ceremonies themselves were sometimes held in the lodge or its gardens, and some even inside mosques.³⁹

However, just like they sometimes adjusted guild internal structures to accommodate mixed membership, Ottoman guilds also found ways to integrate non-Muslim members into their ceremonies, without the need for relinquishing the latter's spiritual dimensions. Thus, in Sarajevo, all guild members, regardless of their religious affiliation, went to the guild outings – organised for the purposes of graduation of novices or journeyman – together, and separated only for the religious parts of the ceremonies. Both Christians and Jews replicated the main sections of the ceremony, including the master's advice to the new graduates –

³⁷ Todorov, *The Balkan City*, p. 115.

³⁸ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, pp. 117-125; Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, pp. 293-294; N. Turna, *Ottoman Craft Guilds and Silk-Weaving Industry in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, unpublished master's thesis, 2001), pp. 36-37, cited in Düzbakar, *Work and Organization*, p. 442.

³⁹ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, pp. 119, 122-123; Düzbakar, *Work and Organization*, p. 442. Presumably, this did not apply to any of those morally questionable professions mentioned here earlier (see note 9).

called ‘*nasihat*’ even among non-Muslims –, but replaced the religious invocations with their own.⁴⁰ Similarly, in Damascus, all non-Muslim members of the guilds are known to have taken equal part in guild initiation and graduation ceremonies, with only the religious supplications being adjusted and replaced with, in the case of the Christians, the Lord’s Prayer, or, in the case of the Jewish craftsmen, a recitation of the Ten Commandments.⁴¹ Furthermore, purely Christian guilds, or Christian members of a mixed guild, were allowed to venerate their own patron-saints and use them as protectors of their guild, in place of Muslim ones.⁴²

In addition to protecting a craft and ensuring the smooth functioning of trade and markets, the religious tolerance within the Ottoman guild system, and the protections which the latter afforded to religious minorities, also had wider social effects. All guilds fulfilled social roles such as providing assistance to the poor in their community, and in Istanbul, for instance, Christian-only guilds regularly collected funds for and bought church icons, silverware and furniture, thus revitalising church life in the city.⁴³

In some regions, the security guaranteed by the guilds to their non-Muslim members led to an increase in non-Muslim proportion of the guild and artisan population, which, in turn, led to demographic changes in the area in general. In 17th-century Sofia, for example, the development of crafts and guilds occurred hand-in-hand with an increase in the Christian population of the city: the number of non-Muslim households in Sofia rose from 238 in the 16th century to 327 by 1645.⁴⁴ This was, in part, due to migration of Christian craftsmen into

⁴⁰ Kreševljaković, *Esnafi i Obrti*, p. 67.

⁴¹ Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, p. 294; Kuran, *Islamic Influences*, p. 45; Rafeq, *Craft Organization*, p. 509. A lot of the information on guild ceremonies in Damascus comes from Ilyās ‘Abduh Bek Qoudsi and his paper prepared for the Sixth Congress of Orientalists held in Leiden in 1883: ‘Nubdha ta’rīkhiyya fī al- ħiraf al-Dimashqiyya’, in Carlo Landberg, ed., *Actes du VI^e Congrès des Orientalistes* (Leiden, 1885), II, pp. 7-34.

⁴² Kreševljaković, *Esnafi i Obrti*, p. 45.

⁴³ Sharkey, *History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews*, p. 94.

⁴⁴ Todorov, *The Balkan City*, p. 118.

the city, encouraged by the opportunities and the protection this provided, as illustrated by the following case: in 1611, a Christian tanner living in Sofia who had been born in a village of a certain *zeamet*-holder, was accused of never paying the tax for the right to abandon his land upon leaving his village some twenty years previously (when called upon it, the tanner admitted his fault and duly paid what he owed).⁴⁵

On the other hand, the open membership, together with the Islamic spiritual and religious dimensions preserved by the guilds, in some cases, contributed to the conversions to Islam among non-Muslim members of the guilds, changing the demographic the other way, namely, causing an increase in Muslim population of a given area: in Sarajevo, the saddlers' and tanners' guilds were among the few whose membership, initially mixed, very quickly, already by the middle of the 16th century, became exclusively Muslim; this was not due to non-Muslims abandoning the guilds, but to conversions within the guild membership, as, in both cases, sources clearly show a considerable number of masters who were recent converts. At the same time, among all Sarajevo guilds, it was these two which displayed the strongest *futuwwa* characteristics in their organisation, traditions and practices, as well as having discernible links with several Sufi orders in the city.⁴⁶ Similarly, a study of Armenian craftsmen in Anatolia has found that the spiritual aspects of Ottoman guilds, and the *futuwwa* rituals practiced by the guildsmen, led to a considerable amount of conversions to Islam among that section of the Armenian population.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Todorov, *The Balkan City*, p. 118.

⁴⁶ Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, pp. 155-156. These differences in the effects that the inter-confessionalism within the guilds had in Bulgaria and Bosnia is no doubt partly due to the differences in local circumstances, the chief among them being better church organisation and a larger Orthodox Christian population in Bulgaria, contrasted with a mix of Orthodox, Catholic, and remnants of a separate Christian confession, the so-called 'Bosnian Church', and a weak or non-existent church organisation in places, all of which contributed to specific nature and scale of the Islamisation process in Bosnia. For more details on this subject see Aščerić-Todd, *Dervishes and Islam*, Introduction, pp. 1-28.

⁴⁷ Y.S. Anasean, *Türk'akan futuvat 'ə ew hayera (The Turkish futuwwa and the Armenians)*, (Vienna: Mkhitarist Press, 1985), pp. 98-113; cited in S. Peter Cowe, 'Patterns of Armeno-Muslim Interchange on the Armenian Plateau in the Interstice between Byzantine and Ottoman Hegemony', in A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno de Nicola, Sara

Of course, inter-confessional relations within the guilds were not always without problems; we have already seen an example of a mixed guild in which the Christian membership of the guild requested their separation from their Muslim fellow craftsmen, albeit for reasons unknown to us.⁴⁸ There are some other examples, mostly relating to guild excursions and festivities, all of which, as already pointed out, were usually attended by Muslim and non-Muslim guild members side-by-side. Thus, 18th- century records in Istanbul show non-Muslim members of a number of mixed guilds requesting permission to hold their guild excursions separately, as their Muslim colleagues have apparently tried to make them bear the full cost of the excursions.⁴⁹ The silk-carders guild experienced a similar problem at around the same time: the Christian membership of the guild refused to take part in their annual outing, claiming they had suffered bad treatment at an earlier picnic, though not specifying at whose hands.⁵⁰ One final case – which can, in fact, be taken as an argument either way – could be added here: an eye-witness account by the 18th century chronicler Molla Mustafa Başeski of an excursion of Sarajevo bakers in 1776. According to Başeski, the outing – known in Bosnia as *kuşanma*, after the ‘girding of the belt’ ceremony performed at these occasions (‘*kuşanmak*’ – to tie) – consisted of some fifty individuals and the Christian members of the guild led the procession with their masters riding at the head. Some Muslims present apparently disapproved of this arrangement and after complaining to the head of the guild (*kethüda*), the Christian masters were taken off their horses and removed from the head of the procession. The Christian members of the guild were understandably upset, and they in turn complained at what they perceived as public embarrassment, a complaint which, according to Başeski, was perfectly justified, and, in his view, the whole incident was caused

Nur Yildiz, eds., *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2015), p. 87, n. 64.

⁴⁸ See note 19.

⁴⁹ Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, p. 289.

⁵⁰ Faroqi, *Artisans of Empire*, p.124.

by ‘people who are considered wise, but are in fact lacking in both wisdom and reason’; he further observed that ‘[unfortunately] things like this were occasionally allowed to happen even in the capital.’⁵¹ Although illustrating lack of religious tolerance on the part of some members of the society, the first thing to note about this event is that, even though the head of the guild ordered the removal of the Christian guild members from the top of the procession, the request for this came from Muslims who were outsiders to the guild, and is therefore not necessarily attesting to any inter-guild tensions. Furthermore, Başeski’s strong condemnation of these actions shows that they were not common, and were generally not acceptable. What was acceptable, and, judging by this particular example, clearly not unusual, was for the Christian members of a mixed guild to take priority position in a guild excursion and even lead the procession.

The fact that these few examples of apparently strained relations within religiously mixed guilds all seem to come from the 18th century has been taken by some to mean that the relations between Muslim and non-Muslim craftsmen suffered a decline in this period.⁵² But in the absence of any further evidence to that effect, for the time being at any rate, no firm conclusion can be made on this either way.

Overall, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that the religiously mixed Ottoman guild system was a success, as examples of problems arising purely from the craftsmen’s religious affiliations are few and far in between when compared with numerous ones demonstrating high degree of cooperation and tolerance among guild members from different religious communities, as well as protection, and professional and even personal security which the guilds consistently offered to their non-Muslim members throughout their existence, right up

⁵¹ Cited in Kreševljaković, *Esnaft i Obrti*, p. 64.

⁵² Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, p. 289. Faroqi, *Artisans of Empire*, p. 147.

until the dissolution of the guild system in the late 19th- early 20th century. This makes Ottoman guilds a perfect example of an Islamic institution in which the *dhimmi/millet* system worked both in theory and practice.

Bibliography

Anasean, Y. S., *Türk'akan futuwwat'ə ew hayera (The Turkish futuwwa and the Armenians)*, (Vienna: Mkhitarist Press, 1985)

Aščerić-Todd, I., 'The Noble Traders: the Islamic Tradition of "Spiritual Chivalry" (*futuwwa*) in Bosnian Trade-Guilds (16th-19th century)', *The Muslim World*, 97/2 (2007), pp. 159-73

Dervishes and Islam in Bosnia: Sufi Dimensions to the Formation of Bosnian Muslim Society (Leiden: Brill, 2015)

Baer, G., 'The Administrative, Economic and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.1/1970, pp. 28-50

'Monopolies and Restrictive Practices of Turkish Guilds', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 13/2 (April 1970), pp. 145-165

'Ottoman Guilds: a Reassessment', in Inalcık, H. and Okyar, O., eds., *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920) (Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920))*, (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980), pp. 95-102

Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History (London: Frank Cass, 1982)

Cohen, A., *The Guilds of Ottoman Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2001)

Cowe, S. P., ‘Patterns of Armeno-Muslim Interchange on the Armenian Plateau in the Interstice between Byzantine and Ottoman Hegemony’, in Peacock, A. C. S., de Nicola, B., Yildiz, S. N., eds. *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2015), pp. 77-105

Çiçek, K., ed., *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation, vol. 2: Economy and Society* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2000)

Düzbakar, Ö., ‘Work and Organization in the Ottoman Empire: Notes on the Trade-Guilds of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Bursa’, *Turkish Studies: International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, vol. 3/4 (Summer 2008), pp. 414-453

Evliyâ bin Derviş Mehmed Zillî Çelebi / ed. O.Ş. Gökyay et al., *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 304 Numaralı Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu — Dizini* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996–)

Faroqhi, S., ‘Crisis and Change, 1590-1699’, in Inalcık, H. and Quataert, D., eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp. 411-636

Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Craftspeople under the Ottomans (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009)

Gadelrab, S., ‘Medical Healers in Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1805’, *Medical History* 54/2010, pp. 377-378

Gerber, H., *Economy and Society in an Ottoman City: Bursa, 1600-1700* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1988)

Gibb, H. and Bowen, H., *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (London: OUP, 1950)

Inalcık, H. and Okyar, O., eds., *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920) (Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920))*, (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980)

Inalcık, H. and Quataert, D., eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994)

Kreševljaković, H., *Esnaflı i Obrti u Bosni i Hercegovini (1463-1878)*, (*Guilds and Crafts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1463-1878)*), Izabrana Djela II (Selected works II), (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1991)

Kuran, T., 'Islamic Influences on the Ottoman Guilds', in Kemal Çiçek, ed., *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation, vol. 2: Economy and Society* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2000), pp. 43-59

Landberg, C., ed., *Actes du VIe Congrès des Orientalistes* (Leiden, 1885)

Lewis, B., 'The Islamic Guilds', *The Economic History Review*, vol. 8/1 (Nov 1937), pp. 20-37

Masters, B., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: the Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001)

Ocak, A. Y., 'Ahi', in *Eİİ* (2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23942> [accessed 16 May 2018]

Peacock, A. C. S., de Nicola, B., Yildiz, S. N., eds., *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2015)

Qoudsi, I., 'Nubdha ta'rīkhiyya fī al- ħiraf al-Dimashqiyya', Landberg, C., ed., *Actes du VIe Congrès des Orientalistes* (Leiden, 1885), II, pp. 7-34

Quataert, D., *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000)

Rafeq, A., 'Craft Organization, Work Ethics, and the Strains of Change in Ottoman Syria', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 111/3 (July-Sep 1991), pp. 495-511

Sharkey, H. J., *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017)

Taeschner, F., 'Akhi', *EI2* (1960–2002), I, pp. 321-323

'Akhi Baba', *EI2* (1960–2002), I, pp. 323-324

'Akhi Ewran', *EI2* (1960–2002), I, pp. 324-325

Todorov, N., *The Balkan City, 1400-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983)

Turna, N., *Ottoman Craft Guilds and Silk-Weaving Industry in Istanbul* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, unpublished master's thesis, 2001)

Wilkins, C., *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo 1640-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2010)

Yi, E., *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden: Brill, 2004)

Author's address

Ines Aščerić-Todd, Teaching Fellow in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Edinburgh, 19 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD

e-mail Ines.Asceric-Todd@ed.ac.uk